

**Course Code and Title** : SOC 101 Introduction to Sociology

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**Brief Course Description** This is an introductory course in Sociology, starting with an overview of the nature of the discipline, followed by a survey of various aspects of the structures and dynamics of social life. General and specific examples are used to illustrate how thinking sociologically adds to our knowledge of the world around us.

**Aims** This course aims to introduce students to the methods, subject matter, and perspectives of sociology.

**Learning Outcomes** Upon completion of this course, successful students will be able to:

- recall fundamental perspectives, methods, and concepts in sociology
- understand readings in basic sociology texts
- effectively consolidate and communicate course materials in class discussions and presentations as well as in the form of academic essays
- apply sociological thinking to analyze everyday social life issues

**Indicative Content**

1. The Sociological Perspective
2. Culture
3. Socialization
4. Social Interaction in Everyday Life
5. Groups and Social Organizations
6. Deviance, Conformity and Social Control
7. Social Stratification
8. Gender, race and ethnicity
9. Families
10. Religion

### **Required/Essential Readings:**

Macionis, John J. 2008. *Sociology*. Pearson Education

You should read the relevant chapters in the textbook accompanying each lecture before coming to class.

### **Recommended/Supplementary Readings:**

Berger, P. 1986. *Invitation to Sociology*. London: Penguin.

Cargan, Leonard and Jeanne H. Ballantine. 2000. *Sociological footprints : introductory readings in sociology*. Belmont, Calif. : Wadsworth Pub. Co

Charon, Joel M. 2004. *Ten Questions: A Sociological Perspective*. 2nd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth

Collins, Randall. 1992. *Sociological insight: an introduction to non-obvious sociology*. New York : Oxford University Press.

Giddens, Anthony. 1982. *Sociology: a brief but critical introduction*. London : Macmillan,

Lau Siu-kai et al (eds.) *Indicators of social development: Hong Kong : (various years)*. Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, (various years).

Levin, William C. 1991. *Sociological ideas: concepts and applications*. Belmont, Calif. : Wadsworth.

Mills, C. Wright. 1970. *The Sociological Imagination*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Ruggiero, Vincent Ryan.. 1996. *A guide to sociological thinking*. Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage Publications.

An important learning objective of this course is to develop students' skills in applying sociological thinking to everyday life. Pay attention, therefore, to local and international news. Make it a habit to scan daily newspapers and read up on items which are of particular relevance to that week's lecture and tutorial topics.

### **Assessment:**

1. Tutorial discussion and participation (20%)
2. Short writing assignments (20%)
3. Mid-term Test (20%) (**17<sup>th</sup> October**)
4. Final exam (40%) – this will take place during exam week

### **Important:**

- Lectures follow the text book closely so do get a copy, either new from the bookstore or use copies in the library; lecture outlines and notices will be posted on WebCT
- English is the medium of instruction for lectures, tutorials and all written work
- You are required to sign a declaration of authorship at your first tutorial class
- Each unjustified absence from tutorials will result in a 5% deduction of your final grade
- If you are late for a tutorial for 10 minutes or more, you will be considered absent

## **Tutorials**

Tutorial discussion and participation (20%)

Short writing assignments (20%) (these are INDIVIDUAL essays of at least 500 words)

Short writing assignments are based on but not restricted to tutorial class discussions. You should modify and develop your essay as you see fit; feel free to include additional references, figures and materials – extra work which demonstrates your diligence and dedication to the task will be rewarded accordingly.

You are expected to participate in discussions – students will not get any of the discussion and participation marks if they do not contribute in class.

Students who arrive early to tutorial classes, please try to help with some furniture rearranging so that everyone can sit around in a circle as much as possible. It is important that seating is in such a way that can facilitate and encourage discussion.

**Readings below refer to your textbook - remember to bring it to class!**

### **1. The Sociological Imagination**

Read chapter 1 “The Sociological Perspective”, esp. p.7 “Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life”, which consists of an extended quotation from C. W. Mills’ book, *The Sociological Imagination*.

Discuss the quote and share with the class what you think it means (ask questions if you do not understand it). Now, think of an incident that has recently happened to you personally (e.g. an overseas trip, an experience at work or in the hostel, attending a relative’s wedding). The tutor will write these down on the board, and collectively you will choose one or two such incidents for analysis. Try to analyse the chosen incidents from a sociological perspective, using the sociological imagination as described by Mills.

### **2. Sociological Perspectives – applying theory**

To prepare for this class, you have to bring any one piece of local or international news from that day. You also need to read chapter 1 “The Sociological Perspective”, especially the section entitled “Sociological Theory”, p. 14-19.

Look at the box on p. 19 “Applying Theory” and make sure you understand it (ask the class or the tutor for clarification if you are unsure). Split the class into 3 groups, each choosing one piece of news item from your group members as your focus, and discuss which of the sociological perspectives described in the book can be best applied to understand this news.

### 3. Culture

Read chapter 3 “Culture”, esp. “Thinking Globally: Confronting the Yanomamo: the experience of culture shock” on p. 60.

A significant percentage of Lingnan students go abroad or go to the mainland on exchange programmes, and we also have students from abroad and the mainland on campus.

- If you are to go abroad for a semester, what are the cultural differences you might encounter?
- If you are an exchange student from another the mainland or abroad, what cultural differences have you encountered in Hong Kong so far?

Do you have any experiences stemming from cultural differences or misunderstandings? Remember, even in a single society like Hong Kong, there also exists a variety of culture! Related your discussion to any of the concepts related to culture as described in chapter three (e.g. culture shock, ethnocentrism, cultural lag, counterculture etc.)

### 4. Socialization

Read chapter 5 “Socialization”, especially the box “Controversy & Debate: are we free within society?” on p. 135. Divide the class into three groups, each group is to discuss one of the three questions at the end of the section. Remember to take notes! Use the last 15 minutes of class to present your answers.

### 5. Social Interaction in everyday life

Read chapter 6 “Social Interaction in Everyday Life”, especially the section “Dramaturgical Analysis: the ‘Presentation of Self’”, on p. 149. Discuss the concept “the presentation of self”, and the related concepts of “front region” and “back region”. Before coming to class, use the internet to search for a suitable video clip that illustrates a typical social situation where people interact (e.g. people waiting at a bus stop, someone giving a lecture or speech to an audience, a couple having a romantic dinner), show this in class if possible. Analyze people’s “presentation of selves” in these situations. Try to apply the various concepts and aspects of communication described in the chapter to your analysis.

### 6. Groups and social organizations

Read chapter 7 “Groups and Organizations”, especially the section “networks” on page 172-175 (including the *Times* article “In Your Facebook.com”).

Before coming to class, consider the various social groups that you belong to, and the social networks to which you have access. On a piece of paper, rank them in order of their importance to you. You can also

categorize your list further by dividing them into different types of groups or networks (e.g. the group ‘FAMILY’ may be further subdivided into ‘parents’ ‘siblings’ ‘uncles and aunts’ ‘grandparents’ etc.)

Look at your list and consider this: What are the factors that shape the groups we belong to, and networks that we can access? What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of being in groups and social networks? Discuss this in class, write up your analysis at home (min. 500 words) and hand this in to your tutor within a week. (5%)

## **7. Deviance**

Read chapter 9 ‘Deviance’. Perform a non-criminal deviant act (e.g. stand facing the back of an elevator as you ride up or down, walk around campus backwards for a few minutes, shop out of someone else's shopping cart at the grocery store, order tea and scones in a bar, say goodbye when you should say hello, etc.). As you perform this act, observe how other people react to you as well as how you feel in performing the act. Take notes immediately after your act on (You may work in groups of 2-3 for this exercise, e.g. one to perform the act and others to take notes or vice versa:

- the non-criminal deviant act that you performed and where you performed it,
- *how* other people reacted to you and *why* you think they reacted that way, and
- *how* you felt when you acted in a socially deviant way and *why* you felt that way..

Come to class with your notes and share your experience with the class. What does this experience tell you about the nature of deviance? Which of the theories described in the text book (see p. 222 – 233) are useful in helping you understand your experience? Write this up (500 words min.) and hand this in to your tutor within a week. (5%)

## **8. Social stratification**

Read chapter 10 ‘Social Stratification’, especially the sections on class and caste in the United Kingdom, Japan, the Former Soviet Union, and China. (pp. 257-261)

Share with the class your thoughts on social stratification in these societies. Do you find them familiar, or strange? How do these stratification systems compare to the one in Hong Kong or your home country? What do you think accounts for these differences?

## **9. Gender, Race and Ethnicity**

Read chapters 13 ‘Gender stratification’ and 14 ‘Race and ethnicity’ before coming to class. Split the class into two groups and discuss one of the following each:

- a. Read “Thinking about Diversity: Race, Class & Gender – Female Genital Mutilation: Violence in the Name of Morality” on p. 345. Discuss the three questions at the end of the box.
- b. The tutor will give you some basic statistics on race and ethnicity in Hong Kong. Based on these statistics and your own experience/observation about living Hong Kong, to what extent would you say that racial/ethnic stratification exists in Hong Kong? To what extent is it a social problem?

Both groups should spend 30 minutes to discuss the questions, and use the last 15 minutes of class to present your views. Write up your analysis (500 words min.) and hand this to your tutor within a week. (5%)

## **10. Families**

Read chapter 18 “Families”, especially the box “Think Globally: The Weakest Families on Earth? A Report from Sweden” on pp.466, and discuss the three questions at the end of the box (substitute “United States” with Hong Kong – which also has a small welfare state).

Do you agree with Popenoe that having a state which cares for nearly every aspect of a person’s needs will weaken or even replace the family? Consider this question within the context of your society and your family. Write up your answers to this question (500 words min.) and hand this in to your tutor within a week (5%).